

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPs

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Part of a letter from Carmen Domene, dated 12th September 1980  
concerning ANTONIO MIGUEL PITURA ROZAPANERA, sent from Geneva, Switz.

My husband was arrested in the street. Asking for a reason he was told that it was very late at night, he had a moustache and was wearing clothing common to subversives. The police drove around the town for a long while, threatening to find a place to kill and dump him. At one point my husband answered back and the police responded that, since he was so cocky, they'd take him to Information who would beat him down a peg or two. At 2 am they left him with Cordoba Police, notorious for the tortures to which they subject detainees. There, he was blindfolded and left standing against a wall. Several hours passed. A policeman suggested "putting him through the machine" (torture) since he was a student and might be able to give information. They moved him somewhere else, where he could hear screams. They showed him photos. He recognised none and had nothing to say. They started beating him. They burned his hands and his face with cigarettes, and since it appears in my country the beard and the moustache count as a political idea or a danger to the community, they had a good time trying to pull his moustache out by the roots. They pulled out half, which later caused a face and mouth infection. All this took about three hours. They then took him, blindfolded and bound, to a patio where, from the howling and crying, he could tell there were other detainees. He stayed here seventeen days, given only water for the first three days, after which, although he himself was still incommunicado, I was permitted to send him food through the police guard.

...I found out about his detention through a neighbour who had seen him being taken to the cell block... I spent three days going through all sections of the police, trying to find out where he was. From the moment they allowed me to bring him food, I at least had the peace of mind of knowing they had legally recognised that they had him in detention.

...On the fifth day they ransacked our house and found journals; ... he was accused of having more than one copy of an issue of The Combatant, the magazine of The Workers' Revolutionary Party. At that time it was a crime to have more than one copy of the publications that the State had declared illegal. It is reasonable to suppose that if we had had anything to feel anxious about, or hide, we would have destroyed the magazines, but I, like he, didn't even remember having them.

The lawyer was optimistic... believing he would probably be freed from detention for lack of a case. But as time passed the general situation for detainees became more tense, judges were under more and more pressure... Unluckily at the very time of sentencing there was serious guerrilla activity in Buenos Aires. The judges, under political pressure, applied the maximum sentence for all cases of a political character, and sentenced my husband to two years.

The lawyer decided to give up any appeal...giving for a reason the growing number of disappearances, deaths and detentions of lawyers defending political cases... March 1976 came. The coup closed those few avenues by which, before, one could try to defend oneself against injustice. My husband was incommunicado for a year, suffering physical and psychic torture... In June, I was dismissed from employment for presumed relations with subversives... In October a group of armed men came to search for me at my house... In June 1978 I left Argentina, under the Swiss Government's protection.

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